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ABSTRACT

This study a) compared the attitudes of male and female teachers of the trainable mentally retarded as measured by the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP); and b) compared the attitudes of this particular teacher group against normative data obtained on other target groups through the criterion instrument. The subjects were 11 male and 19 female teachers from four school districts in southern California. All subjects had been teaching the trainable mentally retarded for at least one year in elementary and secondary schools. The ATDP-Form O was administered to teachers individually or in small groups at their assigned schools. Results showed no significant differences between the attitudes of male and female teachers of the trainable mentally retarded. A comparison of the results of this study with two previously reported studies showed a) the males in the present study had higher ATDP scores than males in the other studies; b) female teachers in this study had lower ATDP scores than females in the other studies but only slightly lower than the normative group; and c) all groups had sufficiently high scores to indicate a general acceptance and understanding of the handicapped. (Two tables of data are included on the report.) (BRB)

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ATTITUDES OF MALE AND FEMALE TMR TEACHERS TOWARD THE HANDICAPPED

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Negative attitudes toward handicapped children among professionals serving exceptional persons can be more harmful and crippling than any mental or physical state inherent to the exceptional individuals. Negative attitudes influence both the concerned professional in terms of self-actualization, and the services they will render to the population they serve, as well as the expectancy and motivation of the handicapped child concerned.

Meyerson (1971) has indicated that disability is not an objective thing in a person, but a social value judgment. Thus, a handicap may or may not follow from a disability, depending on society's attitude toward a given disability. According to Osgood, Succi, and Tannenbaum (1957) attitudes act as predispositions toward behavior. Attitudes are verbal statements about how one feels toward a particular construct. They caution that whether or not an individual behaves toward the construct in a manner consistent with a stated attitude is another question.

In two recent reviews of the literature on attitudes toward the mentally retarded (Harth, 1973) and towards disability using the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP)(Yuker, Block, and Younng, 1966) no study was cited comparing the attitudes of the teachers of the trainable mentally retarded with the ATDP. In the latter review, not one study was cited using a teacher sample. Thus, it appears that a serious need does exist to study the attitudes of specific teacher groups and their attitudes toward the children they are teaching.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) first, to compare the attitudes of teachers of the trainable mentally retarded as measured by the ATDP scale, and (2) compare the performance of this particular teacher group against normative data obtained on other target groups with the criterion instrument.

METHOD & PROCEDURE

Subjects: Ss were selected from four school districts in Southern California having special class programs for the trainable mentally retarded in public schools. Thirty teachers of the trainable mentally retarded (11 male and 19 female) comprised the sample used in this study. All of the Ss had been teaching in a TMR class for at least one year. The teaching level ranged from elementary to secondary level classes.

Instrument: The ATDP-Form O as modified by Lazar, Gensley, and Orpet (1971) was used to measure the attitudes of the Ss. The basic modification to the criterion instrument involved the deletion of the term "physically" from certain items so that a more global view toward disability could be assumed. The underlying assumption being that the operational definition ofa "disabled person" would be from the target population the special class teacher was working with at the time. Thus, in this study, it was assumed that the

attitudes being measured by the ATDP were those toward trainable mentally retarded individuals.

The range of scores on the ATDP can vary from zero to 120. The higher scores indicating greater understanding and acceptance of the TMR, whereas a low score being less understanding and accepting. The scale has twenty items, with each item being rated on a six point type Likert scale, with a weighted score of +3, +2, +1, -1, -2, and -3. I agree very much, I agree pretty much, I agree a little, I disagree a little, I disagree pretty much, and I disagree very much correspond to the weighted scores respectfully.

Procedure: The ATDP was administered to some Ss individually or as small group tests when appropriate by the first two authors. They administered the instruments at the schools where the teachers were assigned. Fifteen minutes was required to administer the ATDP. A uniform administering procedure was utilized throughout the data collection.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

ATDP scores of the male and female teachers were treated by means of a mean t test to determine if any significant difference between the means of the two sex groups existed. The results are indicated in Table 1. No significant difference between male and female teachers of the trainable mentally retarded was found to exist. This finding is significant in that it conflicts with the

results of Lazar, Orpet, and Revie (1972) in that a sex differences favoring young gifted females as more accepting was found. The ATDP served as the criterion instrument in their study also. In their review of ATDP studies, Yuker, Block, and Younng (1966) reported seven studies in which a significant sex difference in favor of the females were reported. In contrast, eight other studies were cited that did not find any significant sex difference. None of these fifteen studies used teachers as a sample. The reviewers stated that one reason for this difference in finding might be attributed to the difference in statistical methods used in the treatment of ATDP scores.

In Table 2. some comparative data is provided showing the two groups in this study against other research reported. The males in this study tend to have a higher mean ATDP score than in the other two studies. This might indicate a slightly higher degree of acceptance and understanding by the male teachers of the TMR. In contrast the female teachers of the TMR have a mean ATDP score much lower than the young gifted females (Lazar, Orpet, & Revie, 1972), but only slightly lower than the normative group (Yuker, Block, and Younng, 1966). Yet, all groups cited in Table 2. have high ATDP scores to indicate general acceptance and understanding of the handicapped per se.

One might conclude that it was a good thing that no sex difference

was found between male and female teachers of the trainable mentally retarded. The reasons that might be attributed to this finding could rest in the nature of the teacher training programs and in a selectivity phenomena that draws a unique type of person for teaching this particular type of exceptional group. Verification of these two assumptions might be obtained in a comparison of TMR teachers with other kinds of teachers serving the handicapped as well as regular children.

Until now, discussion focused upon group data, but an examination of individual ATDP scores indicated that five teachers (4 females and 1 male) had very low scores on the ATDP. This might have attributed to the higher male group mean score in this study. Even more important would be a follow-up study on the five low scoring individuals to see how they actually perform in the classroom. No generalization can be made in terms of this study on this matter because instruments were completed in an anonymous manner except for the sex of the respondent.

In summary, it can be concluded that no sex difference was found between the sample of teachers of the trainable mentally retarded as measured by the ATDP scale. The limited sample size would caution against any broad generalizations. However, this study might serve as a model for future research in which a larger sample size would be utilized, along with a sample of teachers from institutional settings offering educational services and programs. In addition to sex as a variable for study, age, level and nature of training, and teaching experience might be considered.

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TABLE 1.

Number, ATDP Means, & Standard Deviations

Group	N	ATDP Mean	s.d.	df	t	p
Male TMR Teachers	11	76.45	16.16	28	.725	n.s.
Female TMR Teachers	19	72.21	15.05			

TABLE 2.

COMPARISON STUDY

STUDY	SEX GROUP	N	ATDP MEAN
Yuker, Block, & Younng, (1966)	M	1689	72.80
	F	1410	75.42
Lazar, Orpet, & Revie, (1971)	M	15	72.13
	F	15	79.86
Skrtic, Sigler & Lazar (1973)	M	11	76.45
	F	19	72.21